

Dustin Monroe 1/31/2013

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee;

I come before you to oppose Senate Bill 143 because of the implications that it will have on the people and wildlife of Montana.

Senate Bill 143 is a bill that is supposed to revise Bison Management laws in Montana. This Bison Management Policy is to shoot anytime of the year and statewide. How is that management and not extermination? Would we do this with any other wildlife or cattle?

This bill does not take in account the Tribal soventriy rights at all nor was there any consultation with Individual tribes that this bill will affect.

The truth is defined by facts not by fear.

This January, in the Gardiner Basin, north of Yellowstone Park, a Montana judge rejected a bid by Park County, Park County Stockgrowers Association and Montana Farm Bureau to require bison to remain in the park. In announcing his decision, the judge described living with wildlife as a part of the landscape in the Northern Rockies.

Wild bison from Yellowstone National Park are some of the most intensely tested wildlife in the country and have been repeatedly proven to be disease-free.

WHAT IS BRUCELLOSIS? This is the question on why were here according to anti-buffalo groups but the real reason is Money. Anti-buffalo organizations will also create false propaganda to create fear with no factual information but stories that are not documented in state/federal agencies.

The disease was originally transmitted to wildlife by cattle, and now is found in wild elk and buffalo of the Greater Yellowstone Area.

Brucellosis is transmitted by exposure to birth materials or by ingesting infected milk. Although there is a very small chance that buffalo bulls could transmit the bacteria to female cattle during mating, the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee stated..... " transmission from buffalo to cattle is almost certainly confined to contamination by a birth event by adult females." **Therefore, non-pregnant females, calves and male buffalo pose virtually no risk of disease transmission. Yet Montana kills all bulls wandering outside of Yellowstone and even shoots calves.**

IS IT A THREAT TO HUMANS?

Human beings historically have contracted brucellosis (undulant fever) by ingesting non-pasteurized milk or careless handling of infected carcasses.

Meat from infected animals can be safely eaten as long as the meat is adequately cooked. The **Centers for Disease Control no longer consider brucellosis a reportable human disease**. The chances of humans contracting undulant fever are extremely remote.

IS IT A THREAT TO LIVESTOCK?

There has never been a verified case of transmission of brucellosis from a free-ranging buffalo to range cattle. In 1989, 810 cattle from 18 different herds where Yellowstone buffalo ranged were tested twice for brucellosis infection. No cattle tested positive for exposure to brucellosis. There is some evidence that Yellowstone's buffalo have developed a tolerance for the disease and do not experience many stillbirths. In fact, the Yellowstone buffalo population continues to grow, proof that brucellosis does not limit population growth.

Bison bulls and calves cannot transmit brucellosis. Yet, almost one third (341) of all bison killed last year were bulls. 146 calves were shot or sent to slaughter.

Even though a vaccine for cattle is available, Montana does not advocate mandatory vaccination of cattle against brucellosis. **To protect cattle from the disease, only female calves would have to be vaccinated, once in their life. The cost would be \$6/cow.** Oddly, although certain Montana groups claim any threat of brucellosis is "too great", it does not insist that ranchers vaccinate against the disease. Instead, certain Montana groups demand that non-ranching taxpayers pay to "protect" cattle by killing bison.

Because Montana cattle are free of the disease, the federal agency in charge of animal disease control, **APHIS, has designated Montana as a "brucellosis-free" state.** Contrary to popular belief, the mere existence of brucellosis in wildlife, not domestic, animal, is not sufficient cause for APHIS to downgrade a state's brucellosis status. There must be an outbreak of brucellosis in either cattle or other domestic livestock before APHIS could downgrade a state. Thus, infected bison (which are wildlife, not livestock) do not pose a threat to the brucellosis status of the State.

Native Americans and the Tribes are some the biggest land owners in Montana. We have rights and a personal stake like the Rancher. On Reservations, we also have Ranchers and cattle but you probably won't see one of them in here because they have learned how to live with wildlife as a part of the landscape in Montana. Bison are a main part of our culture and this should be taken into consideration because of the Native Americans religious Freedom Act of 1978 will play a part in this for protection much like the Bald Eagle; the Act has a clause that the buffalo can fall under if need to be taken to Federal courts.

These are the facts and this bill does not represent Montana Values, I ask this committee to do the right thing and Table this bill today. Please Table Senate Bill 143